

Artistic Visions

THE ART OF "HERBIE"



**Sketches, works in progress,
and commentary by the artist**

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FOREWORD

How many times has this happened to you? You head over to a friend's house looking to hang out and, if you're lucky, score a free meal and some Oreo cookies. At first everything is nice and chatty as you sit around talking about the latest Harry Potter book, non-Euclidean geometry as it applies to foxes, and who serves the best Tom Kah when somebody in the group says, "Let's draw!" Dutifully, you open your backpack and pull out your sketchbook, blue pencils (slightly chewed), mechanical pencil (.07mm), Rapidograph pen set (shiny and clean), *How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way* reference book (crisp, unbent spine), and sit there. Minutes pass as ideas flick across your mind as you search for the perfect scene to capture for posterity. Eventually, an idea sticks, and with resolve and determination you put pencil to paper, about to sketch, when the person sitting next to you bubbles, "I'm done! How's this look?" They hand you their sketchbook and your jaw drops. Before you is an intricately rendered scene in pencil, figures fully developed and scenery fully realized. They even used chiaroscuro. Damn. Looking down, you quickly close your sketchbook, pleading acute arachibutyrophobia, and watch as the people around you effortlessly bring imagination to life. What is their secret? Why are some people able to distill their dreams and imagination and transmute it into art, while the rest of us struggle to draw a straight line?

It is with these questions in mind that Sofawolf went into the world, examining the works of talented artists in hopes of gleaning how these alchemists turn lead into gold. The first person we approached is an animator with Walt Disney Feature Animation and goes by the nom de plume of "Herbie". Through interviews, commentary and sketches this very talented artist has shared with us his thoughts about the artwork he creates. I hope you enjoy this collection of wit, wisdom and art as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Cheers,
Mark Brown



AN INTERVIEW WITH "HERBIE"

By Mark Brown

If you've seen a Disney animated film in the last decade, you've undoubtedly seen some of Herbie's work. A truly gifted and talented artist, Herbie has worked on such feature films as *The Lion King*, *Mulan*, and more recently, *Lilo & Stitch*. Herbie graduated from The Ringling School of Art and Design in Sarasota, Florida. Over the years he's worked as a character performer (think mascot), radio talk show host, disc jockey, artist for "Peters Creative Group, Mother Goose and Grimm," and his hand has had a successful moonlighting gig as a puppet. When not working with Disney, or pursuing his other creative endeavors, he works with the charity "Give Kids The World". "Give Kids The World" is a 51-acre, non-profit resort for children with life-threatening illnesses whose one wish is to visit central Florida's best loved attractions (<http://www.gktw.org>).

Mark Brown: Thanks for the time! Let's jump right into this as I'm sure folks are eager to learn more about Herbie. Who are some of your main influences in your artwork?

Herbie: I could list a dozen, but from the top of my head ... Heinrich Kley, a turn of the century political cartoonist from Germany. He really understands pose, gesture and expressions, and he really puts a great deal of imagination into his drawings. He likes to play with reality and create little scenes. Frank Frazetta, I love the way he captures action in his poses, they

are very fluid and everything reads really well. Also, Mark Fredrickson, a western illustrator and sculptor. He has great anatomy and motion and puts a lot of thought into his character and animal pieces. The biggest influences outside of print would be Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, and more recently James Cameron. Also, Jim Henson and Walt Disney.

M.B.: When did you begin to draw?

H.: I've doodled my entire life, since I was 8 or 9 years old. I started taking it more seriously around high school. Before that I thought about being a disc jockey, which I was for about 7 years through high school and college.

M.B.: Seven years as a DJ is a long time! What five CDs are in your CD player right now?

H.: At the moment I am listening to Deep Forest, Cirque Du Soleil's *La Nouba*, *Adiemus*, *Nova Era*, and the *Islands of Adventures* soundtrack. It's all very atmospheric and it allows me to think without words getting put into my head.

**"I WANT TO BE SUCCESSFUL INSPIRING
OTHER PEOPLE. BUT ONLY IF I'M DOING GOOD."**

M.B.: How has your technique changed through the years?

H.: I started with a cartoony style when I was younger, but in college I went purely illustrative and dropped

cartoony completely. I focused on trying to learn the basics of art. Animation is about how we move, how things come together, and you learn that by studying the fundamentals of art. I did a lot of figure drawing, at least 5 hours a day outside of the classroom during college. I would spend my free time just sitting at zoos or parks drawing people. When I was going to college I was working at Disney in the character department and I'd go out and draw people during breaks and lunch. If I was sitting down, I was drawing.

M.B.: Which medium do you enjoy the most?

H.: Pencil sketching is my favorite. It's when I'm at the idea stage and I'm thinking with a pencil. Everything is at the basics before I decide how I want to color it or pose it.

M.B.: Do you enjoy working with other materials?

H.: I enjoy costuming and puppet building; it's a lot like sculpting. Apparently, I don't make it right as I sculpt the costume head out and then build it up with layers of foam and hot glue. I begin with a big block of foam, grab a turkey carving knife, and start digging in until the character comes out. I'm usually not very delicate when I start and the room ends up being covered in foam. It's similar with clay sculpture—it's a combination of building up and cutting back, adding and taking away. My medium of choice for sculpting is Super Sculpey. You can get the right amount of details, it's soft to work with and it quickly hardens to make things more secure so I don't have to be really delicate with it. Plus, you can smooth it out so you don't have to worry about fingerprints. It's a very forgiving medium. It is also what we make the maquettes out of for the 3D models of the characters in the animation department.

M.B.: What are your professional plans for the future? Do you have any dreams that you have not yet fulfilled?

H.: I would love to be a character designer for a film, but my ideal goal is to be the director of a film. Either a director or a character designer, that's what I'd love to do.

M.B.: What are your inspirations when you are not working on animated films for Disney?

H.: Other good art, other good artists—people who can really bring a drawing to life. I'll look at a drawing and my first impression is how well it is drawn, and then what is going on in the drawing. If it really comes to life off the page for me, then I realize how good it is. Those are the ones that really inspire

me—that, and good story telling. Good movies! I've never been a big reader, so movies have always been my biggest form of entertainment. I'm also a big fan of European comics. I don't speak any other languages, but you can really read and follow the stories as they are so expressive and emotional. *Blacksad* is a recent one that I love, also *Herobear and the Kid* by Mike Kunkel. Again, both are so expressive to the point where everything is very easy to read.

**"ANIMATION IS ABOUT HOW WE MOVE,
HOW THINGS COME TOGETHER,
AND YOU LEARN THAT BY STUDYING
THE FUNDAMENTALS OF ART."**

M.B.: Have you met any of the voice actors whose characters you have animated?

H.: Many! A lot of the voice actors and actresses are very interested in animation so every other day somebody is coming through. It's usually a quick hello or a quick dinner. One of my most memorable meetings was a tour I gave to Jack Palance. I asked him to do an answering machine message for me, and he did! Other memorable ones were Dom DeLuise, Mark Hamill, Michael Jackson and Princess Diana. She did a tour while she was visiting and she was very polite and very personable. I see Roy Disney a lot. The first time I meet Roy it was kind of a surprise—I shocked myself! I was working as an intern on a very difficult project that required a lot of hours. I think I slept under my desk sometimes. I was in on a Saturday night and was one of the only people in the studio. Roy was going through the studio and doing his business, saying "Hi" to some of the folks still working. I was delirious at that point and he came up to my desk asking if somebody he was looking for was in and the first words from my mouth were "Oh My God, somebody defrosted you!" I was expecting to have to pack my bags, but he was great—we both got a laugh out of it and I think he tells the same story. He really looks like his uncle.

M.B.: What do you like to do when you are not drawing?

H.: I like different forms of entertainment. I've been a mascot/character performer since I was 15 years old. The first time was at an entertainment center in Rhode Island where I was a roller skating dinosaur. I enjoy doing mascot performances and parades, as well as theme park characters. I also love puppetry;

again it's about bringing things to life—that's always been my fascination. I am also the director of a puppet show on the internet, and for charity organizations (www.pawpet.tv, www.gktw.org).

M.B.: What are you working on now?

H.: I'm working as a cleanup animator on a movie called *Brother Bear* due out later this year; officially I'm a Key Assistant Animator in cleanup animation. Basically, I'm a tracer—not true! [laugh] What I do is make sure that the character is on model, as well as finishing the animation. Before Disney I worked on a comic called *Mother Goose and Grimm* with an artist named Mike Peters. After that I got a job with Disney Animation and the first project was *The Lion King* where I worked on the hyenas—mostly on Ed, but some on all three. Next, I worked on the character John Smith in *Pocahontas*, Phoebus in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, Mushu in *Mulan*, Turk in *Tarzan*, and Pacha in *The Emperor's New Groove*. After *The Emperor's New Groove* I worked on the character John Henry on the animated short *John Henry*; then on a number of Imagineering projects for the California Adventure Park. In *Lilo and Stitch* I worked on Captian Gantu and Cobra Bubbles, which was quickly followed by *Brother Bear*.

M.B.: Can you tell us which project has been the most rewarding?

H.: With every film I work on I learn a lot. I'd have to say *Brother Bear* as the person I'm working with is the brilliant artist, Rachel Bibb, and I'm learning probably more from her than I've learned in my entire life. It's very humbling. She's like two good artists.

"ART INSPIRES. AND THAT IS ITS ROLE."

M.B.: Why did you choose to get into art?

H.: Performing, drawing, sculpture—it is all a form of art. Art inspires, and that is its role. Whether to depress you, or make you happy—it's inspiring you. To an artist, to anybody, inspiration is like food! Without it we die motivationally. If we're not inspired to do anything then we'd never get out of bed. I want to be successful inspiring other people, but only if I'm doing good. I don't want to inspire people to be depressed, I want them to be happy.

M.B.: Do you have any advice for young artists?

H.: Practice, practice, practice. Try to draw from a reference and not just from imagination. You have to study from what inspires you to learn, then when you draw from imagination you've laid down the groundwork and you can make it look the way you want. Think with a pencil!

M.B.: What is an average day in the life of Herbie like?

H.: You really want to know? Okay, here is an average Herbie day:

- 8:30am—Wake up and run through the shower to try to make it to my office at Disney by 9:00am.
- 9:15am—Finally make it to work. D'oh! Get coffee and a bowl of cereal from the studio commissary.
- 9:30am—Start the day off by checking the drawings done by the crew the night before. Listen to talk radio.
- 10:00am—Start drawing at Top Speed all day while playing beat-the-clock-scene by Friday at 6pm deadline.
- 11:00am—Put *Jerry Springer* or *Court TV* on as background noise.
- 12:00pm—Grab a quick lunch and a twenty minute park walk.
- 1:00pm—Call and talk to friends for most of the afternoon.
- 2:00pm—Ponder how to take over the studio (Mmwwaahahaha!)
- 3:00pm—Put *The Weekenders* and *Proud Family* on the TV as background noise.
- 4:00pm—Smoothy time! Run to the commissary.
- 4:30pm—Second twenty minute park walk.
- 5:00pm—A full hour of *Elimidate*. Woohoo! Try to do some push-ups in the office.
- 6:00pm—Dinner break. Go to the lobby for catering. Eat in the office while watching *Friends*.
- 7:00pm—Time for *The Simpsons*! Get last coffee for the night.
- 8:00pm—Call friends back.
- 9:00pm—I can do it! Just one more hour! Hand starting to hurt.
- 10:00pm—Tally up the days work and get the heck out of there!
- 10:20pm—Get home and check e-mail. Unwind a bit with some wine.
- 10:45pm—Go over to friends and do fun sketchbook drawings.
- 12:00am—Go home, double check e-mail, perhaps play just 5 minuets of *Roller Coaster Tycoon* before bed.
- 2:00am—Go to bed.

M.B.: Thank you very much, Herbie!



Try to practice drawing every day. Remember, the more you draw, the better you get. If you go a long time without drawing you can forget what you've learned.

Herbie 2001

Try not to look only into imagination when you draw. Look at some of your favorite art and try to learn from it.





Draw from life as much as possible. When you draw something from life, you are the one choosing what lines to use.

*Herbie
2002*





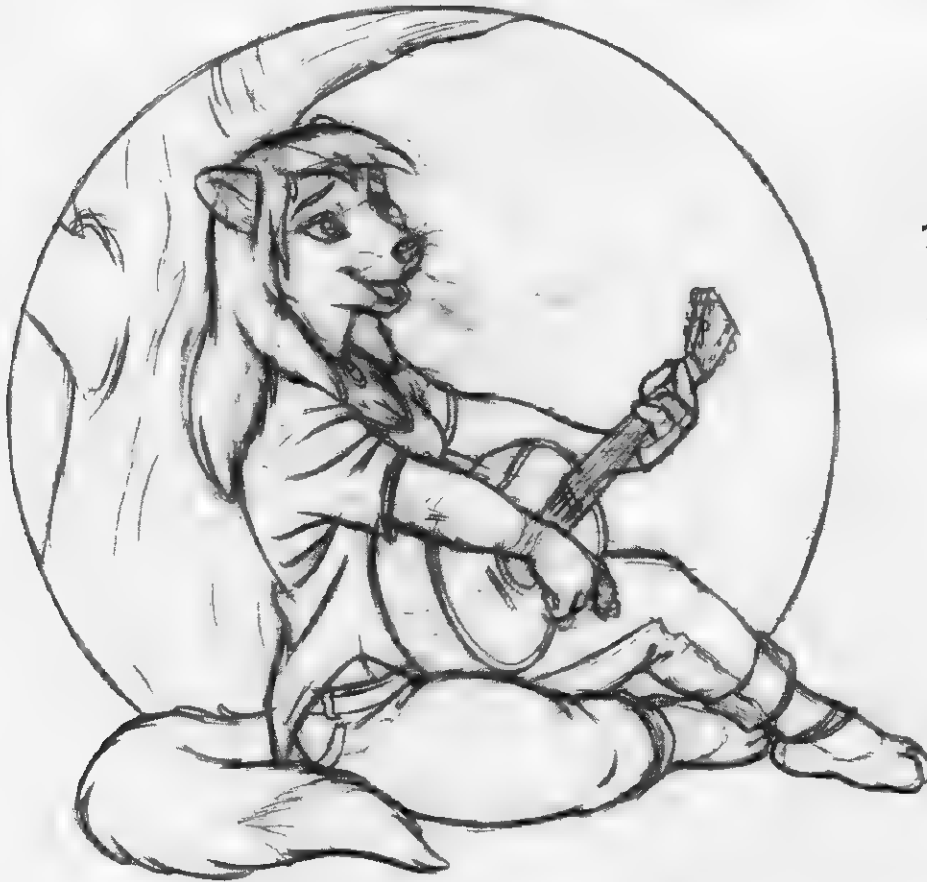
Animators are machines
that turn coffee into art!

Herbie
Hamilton
2001

Your dream is your life destiny.
If you are not following your
dream, you have failed.







Treat yourself right
when you draw.
Put on good music,
or pop yourself
some popcorn.

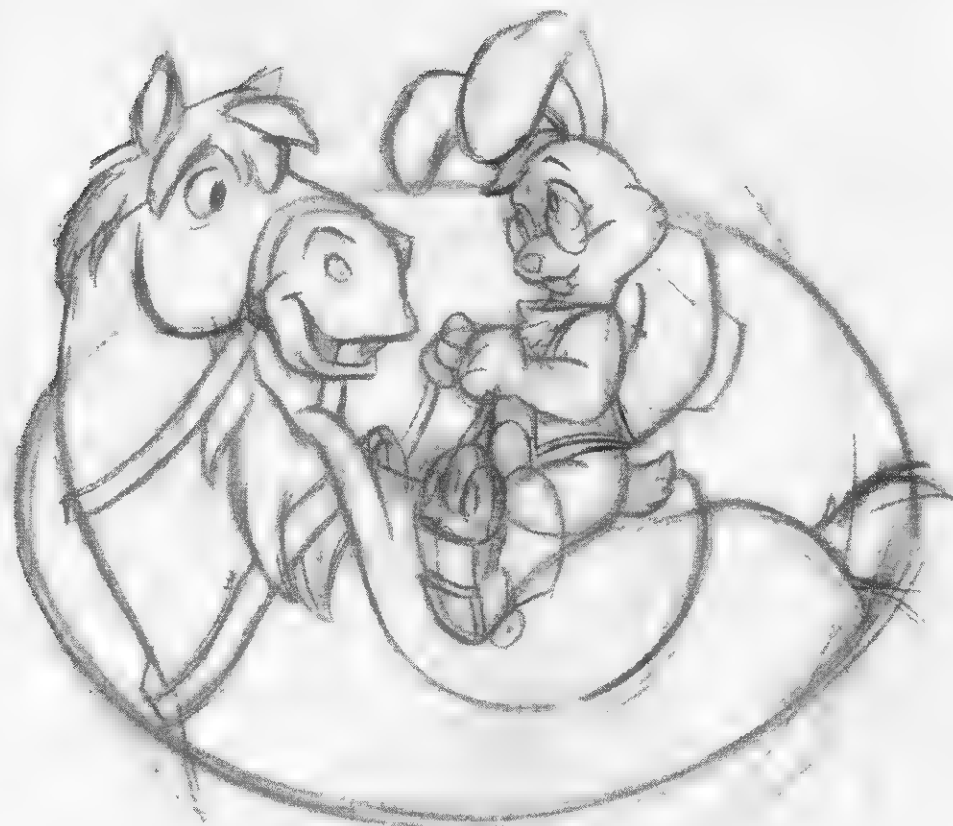
Don't be afraid to
try drawing different
poses!





To draw faster, try giving
yourself a time limit and keep your
eye on the clock!

Herbie
2001





Marty and Circles are copyright
Steve Domanski, Scott Fabianek,
and Andrew French

If I see the way
another artist draws
an ear, or a nose,
or a sneaker then
I'll study it and see
what it is about it
that I like. I do this
not to duplicate it,
but to adapt it to be
what I want.





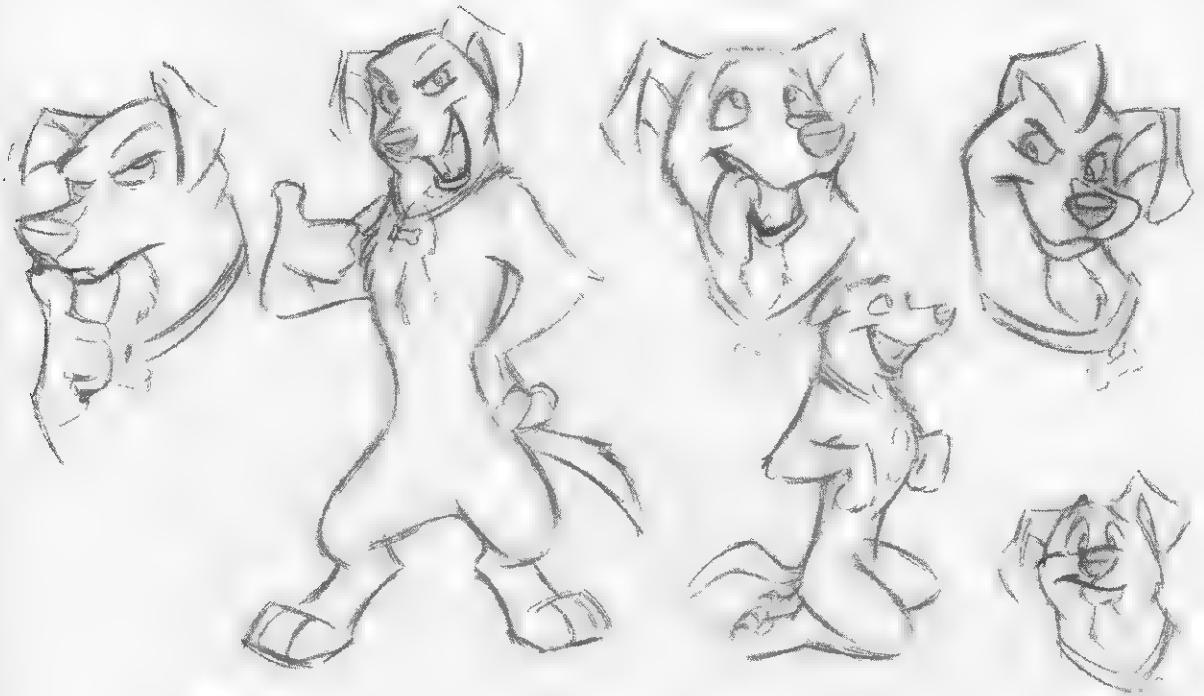
I've actually included elements of the person into this drawing. He's an artist, he wears glasses and he has long hair. I try to look at the person and bring some of that into the drawing, it adds another challenge to the sketch.





When designing a character, try to draw him from as many angles as possible.





"Happiness is all a frame of
mind. It all depends on how
you look at things."

-- Walt Disney





COMING SOON
"The Chad Pin"

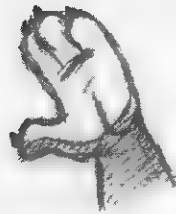
One of my friends that works with me sells pins at the park. At Disney they make pins for everything! So, I wanted to make a pin that was of him. Mow!

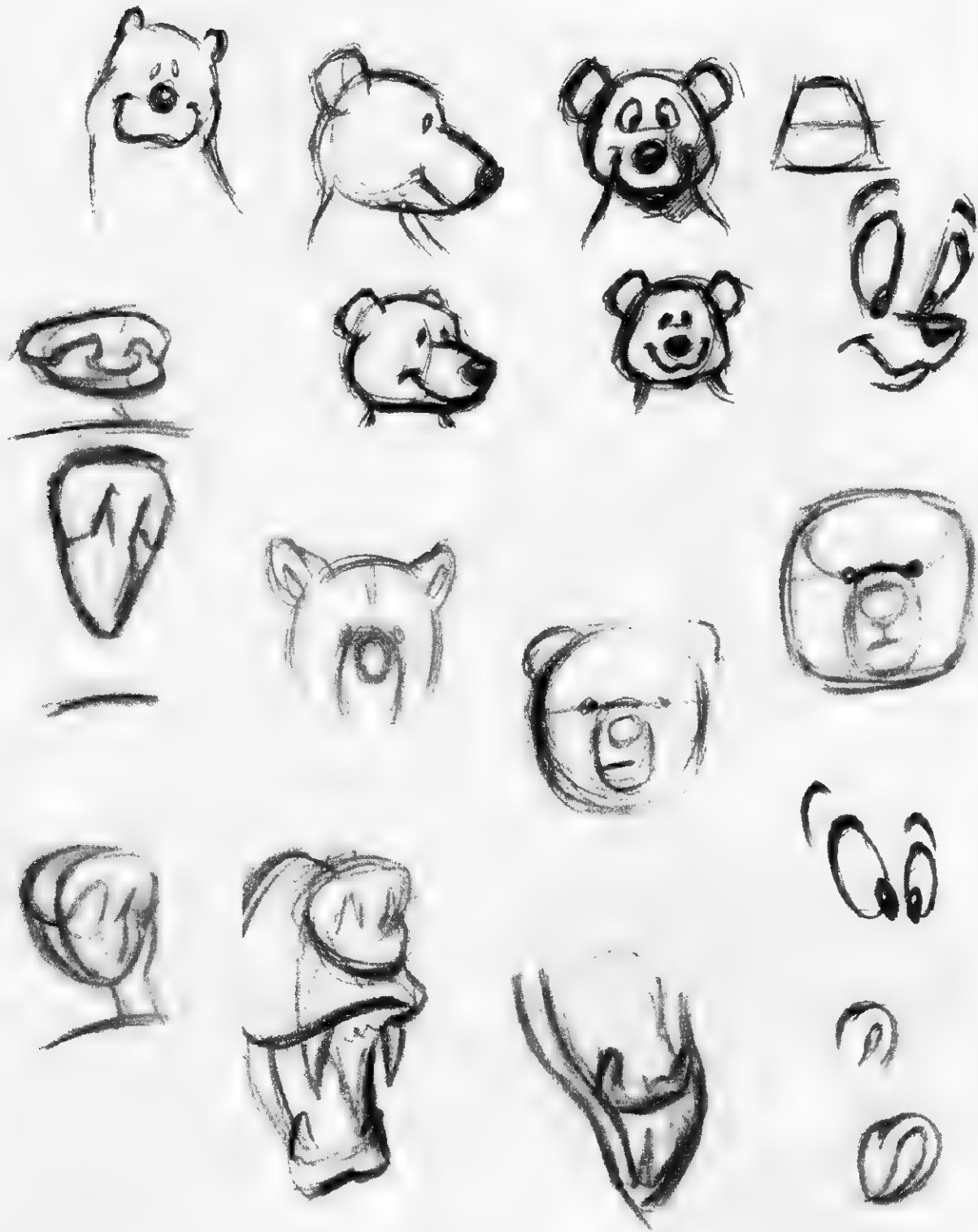
These are studies from a French graphic novel called Blacksad. The artwork is gorgeous! The way it reads, the anatomy, the really nice gestures -- Juanjo Guarnido is brilliant in the way he handles those things.

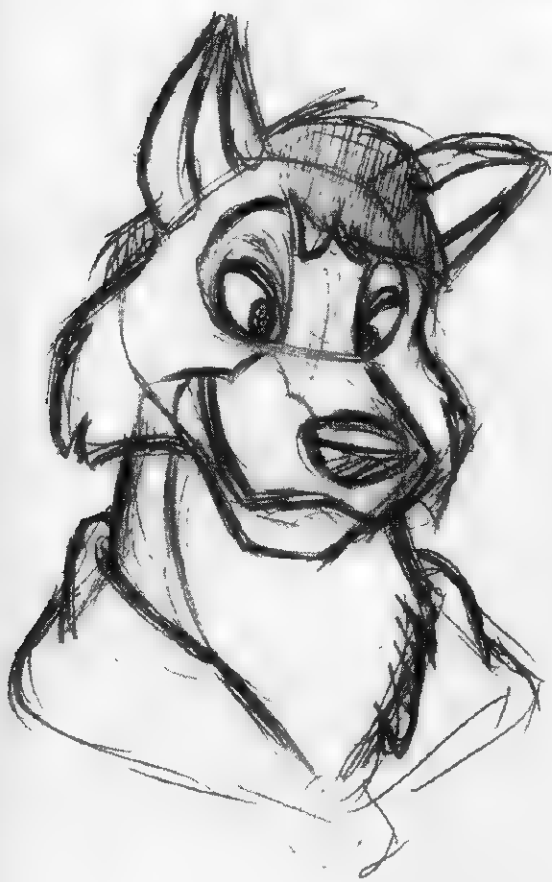




Draw from life. Spend time sitting at the mall, or local park, and draw people. Try to capture their gestures with simple line sketches.



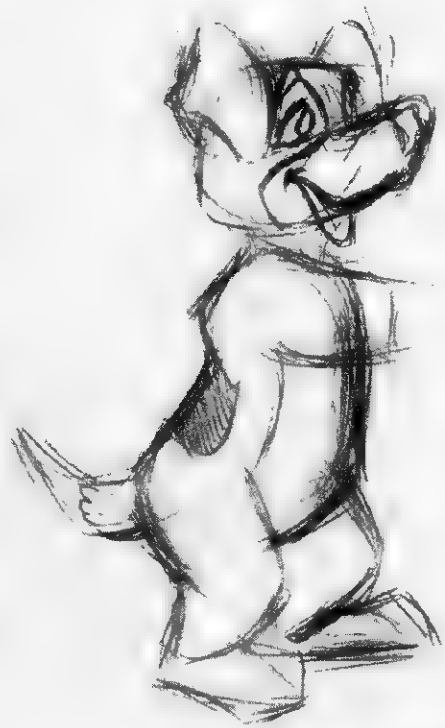




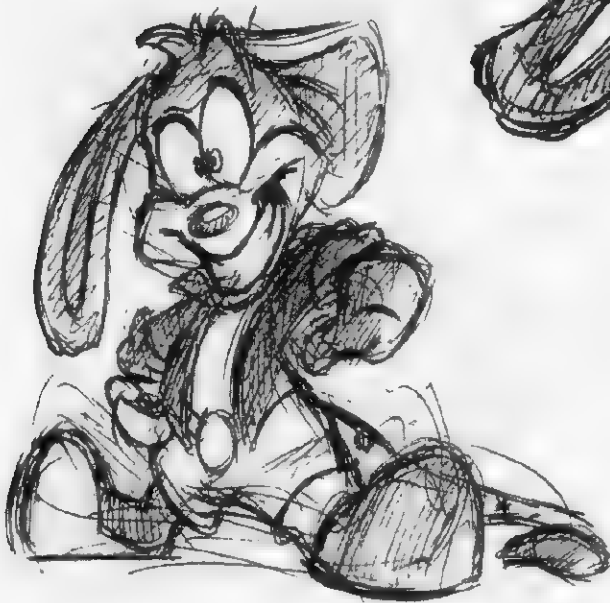
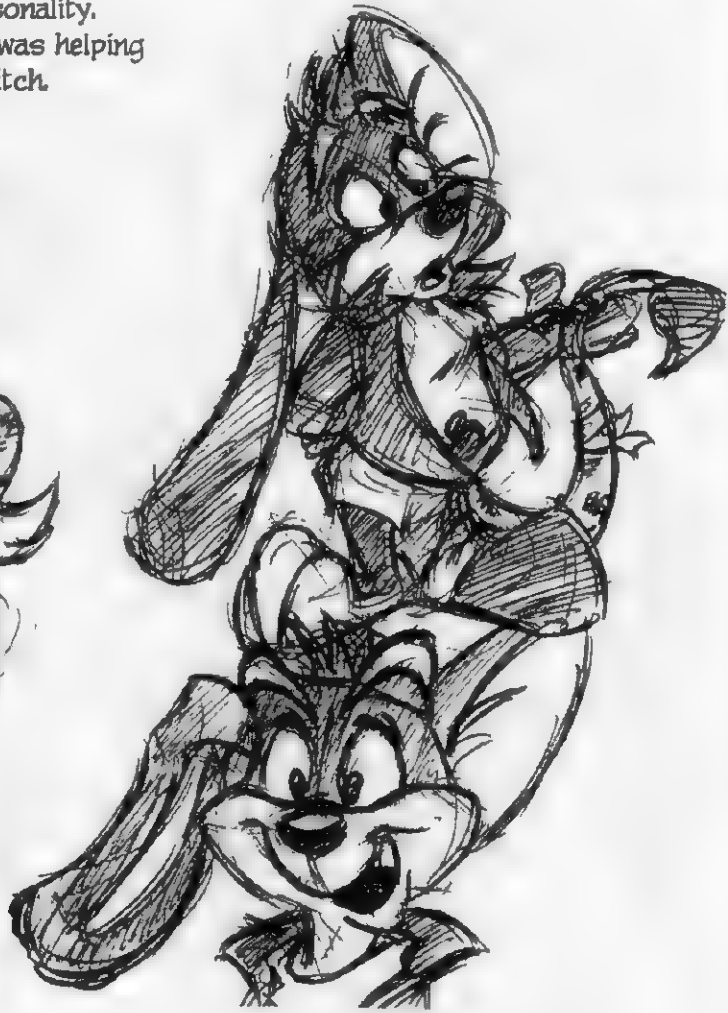
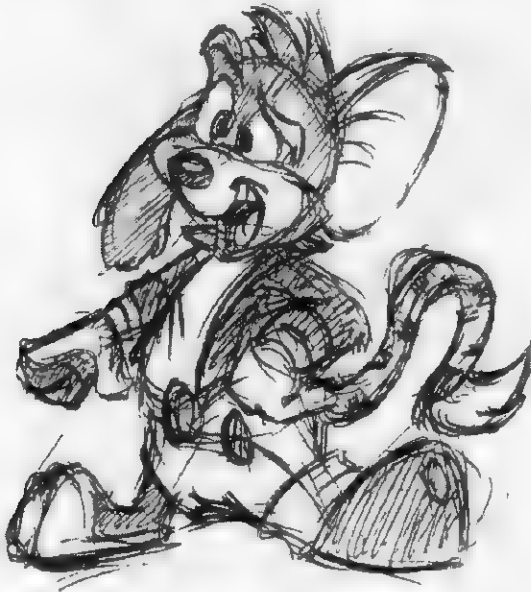
When inspiration to draw hits you, run with it!
Even if you find yourself in a nice restaurant.



I love taking challenges
from other people.
People have amazing
imaginations and
they challenge you to
capture their ideas.

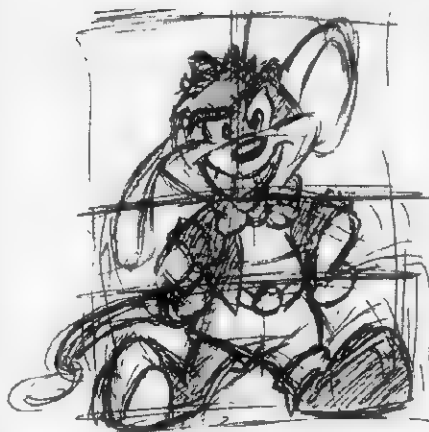


Try to draw your characters with different expressions to help give them personality. This is a character called Morph I was helping a friend develop for an animated pitch.



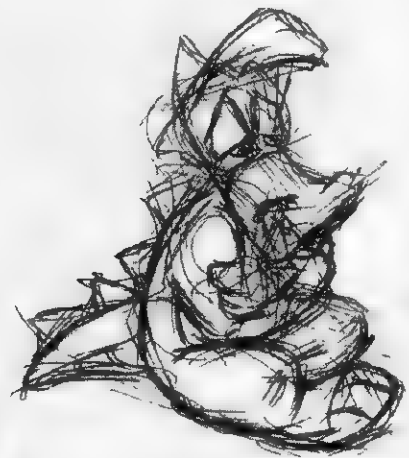


Another artist I like is the guy that first did Tank Girl, Jamie Hewlett, who is currently doing animation for the band Gorillaz - he's brilliant!

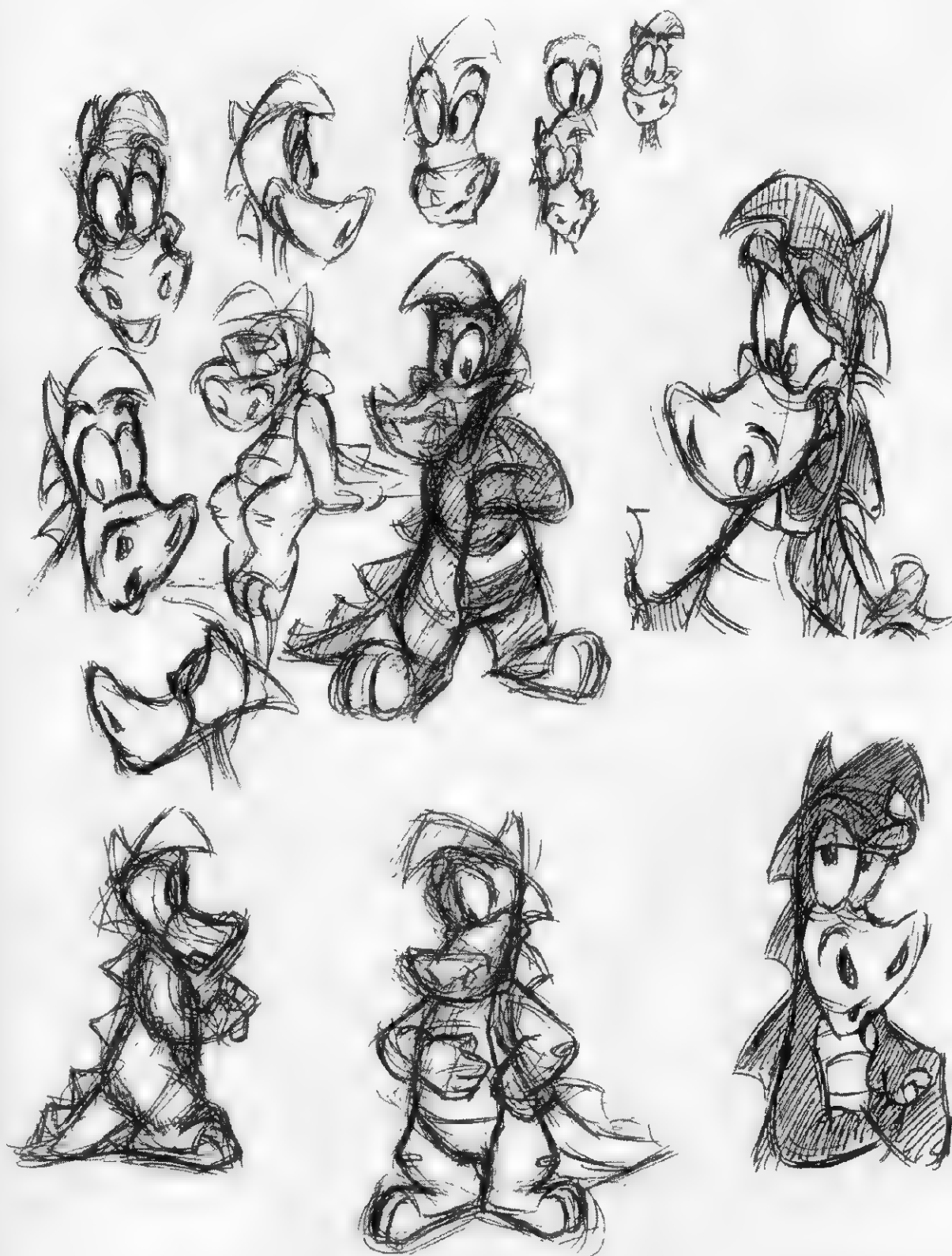


This is for a movie pitch I'm still working on - The Big Bad Wolf. Anthropomorphic characters are really popular in Europe and I was trying to go with a style similar to what I see over there. Everybody over there is experimenting - I love variety!

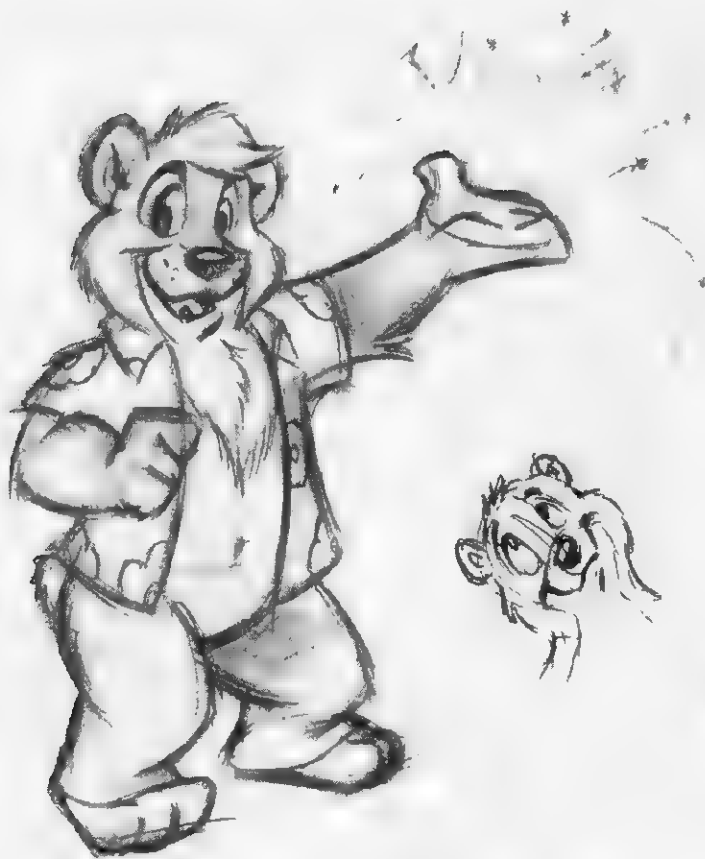




For every character there is a formula on how to draw them -- like recipes for food. Try to find the structure in what you are drawing.



Reality is for those
who lack imagination.





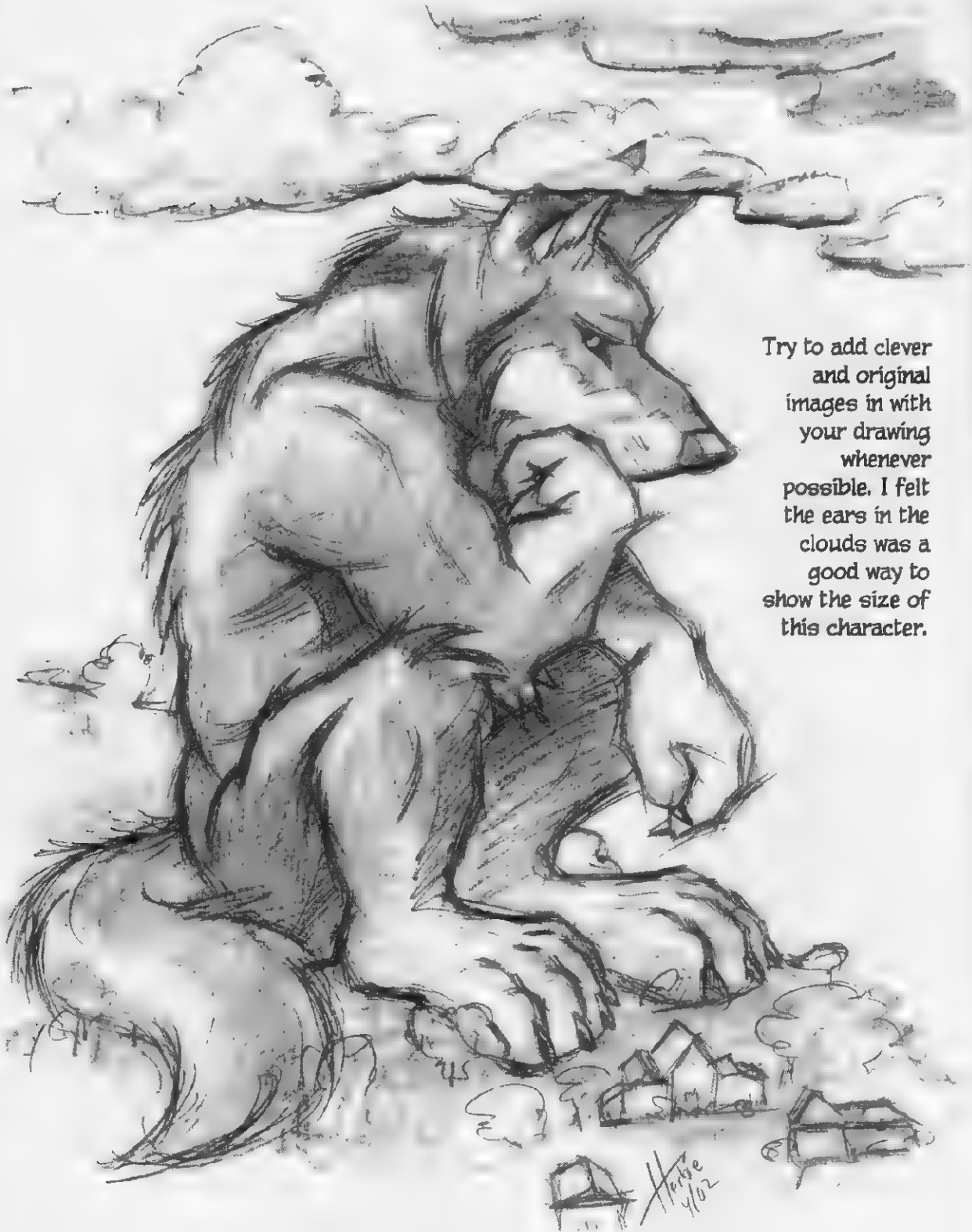


an



I also want to try and make things as realistic as possible. I love shadows and light and how they work with each other. I like taking things like animals and combining them with people and try to make them look as realistic as possible; something realistic enough to give a viewer pause and make them ask, "Is this real?"





Try to add clever and original images in with your drawing whenever possible. I felt the ears in the clouds was a good way to show the size of this character.

THE ART OF "HERBIE"

Try drawing with different things; pens, pencils, crayons and markers.
You may surprise yourself!



Herbie
Hamill
2002



Try drawing requests from other people. Their ideas may challenge you,
and they may even give you money! Ka-ching!



I stole this pose from a Spiderman drawing I saw. I wanted to capture the anatomy in the chest and the arms.



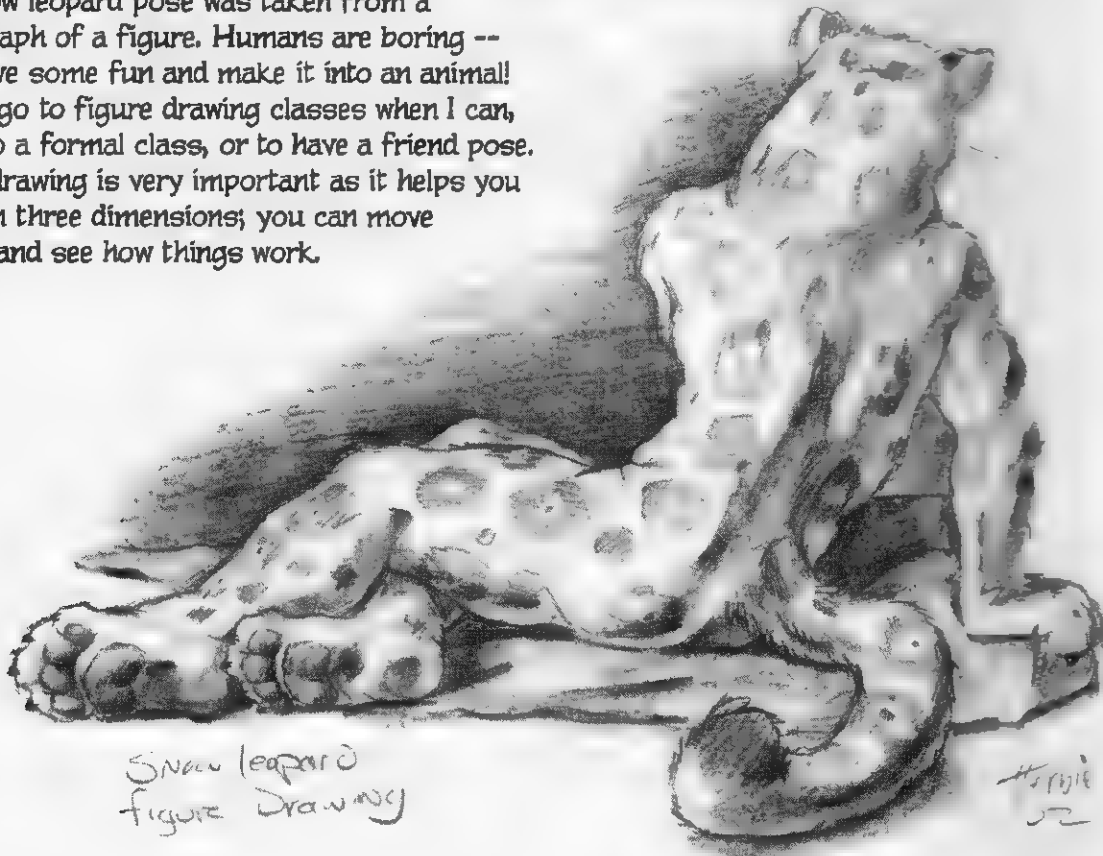
This was inspired by a drawing of a leg I saw in the book *Dynamic Figure Drawings* by Burne Hogarth. I started with the legs and built up from there.



Practice makes perfect. The more you draw, the stronger your art will get. If you do 100 drawings, the last drawing will be better than the first. You learn with every drawing you do.



The snow leopard pose was taken from a photograph of a figure. Humans are boring -- let's have some fun and make it into an animal! I try to go to figure drawing classes when I can, either to a formal class, or to have a friend pose. Figure drawing is very important as it helps you to see in three dimensions; you can move around and see how things work.



Snow leopard
figure drawing

H. H. H.

Try to keep your characters charming and appealing.
Study anatomy to make your characters more believable.



Costumes and clothing! I really love the way costumes can help a story. I remember a visit to Ireland and there was this little statue of a bunny rabbit musical band with the characters wearing great costumes. That really cinched it for me and helped to tell the story! I loved it.



One of my old bosses, Mike Peters, told me that if you can tell a story without saying one word then you have achieved it! That is what I'm trying to convey, to tell a whole story without telling one word. Costumes help with that, and scenery too!



Draw with other artists.
Always ask other people's
opinions, and think about
their comments.





Herbie
2001

When building your portfolio, remember to add the best drawings only!
When in doubt, leave it out.





A good portfolio, not the degree, will get you the job.



Props, the items a character holds or uses, can also enhance the storytelling aspects of a drawing.



Herbie
2001



Try to draw through the character to make sure everything lines up before you add the clothing.

This is necessary to help you see how folds will bend in the clothing.

Don't let clothing become a cheat!







Herbie
2001



Don't always draw from imagination. Try to study from art that inspires you.
When you draw from reference, you learn while you draw.



"Do, or do not. There is no try."
--Yoda







Try to think of your drawing as if it is in three dimensions.
Give it good depth and structure.

This is based on a statue called Icarus. I wanted to capture that pose with more of a fantasy character. I love the great masters, Michelangelo, Leonardo ... and Splinter, too!



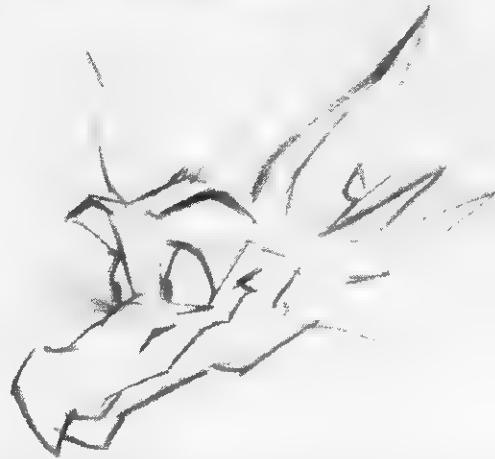
Once I feel comfortable enough with anatomy I'd like to create completely original creatures. But, the only way I can get to that point is to totally understand the anatomy of animals that exist.





This sketch was inspired by a suit of armor I saw on TV. I thought it was a cool look the way the armor laid on top of all the appendages.

It leaves the character to be seen since you aren't flooding the figure with armor. I encourage people to jump on ideas right away or else you will lose it.



I was inspired while looking at some art by Jen Seng -- amazing artist! If I see something that inspires me then I jump on it and draw it as soon as I can. I encourage other artists to do the same thing. If they see a wrist I've done and they really like it then I tell them to go for it! If they are inspired by my art that is the biggest complement I can be given. I'd never be offended if they took a part of my art, studied it, and integrated it into their own style.



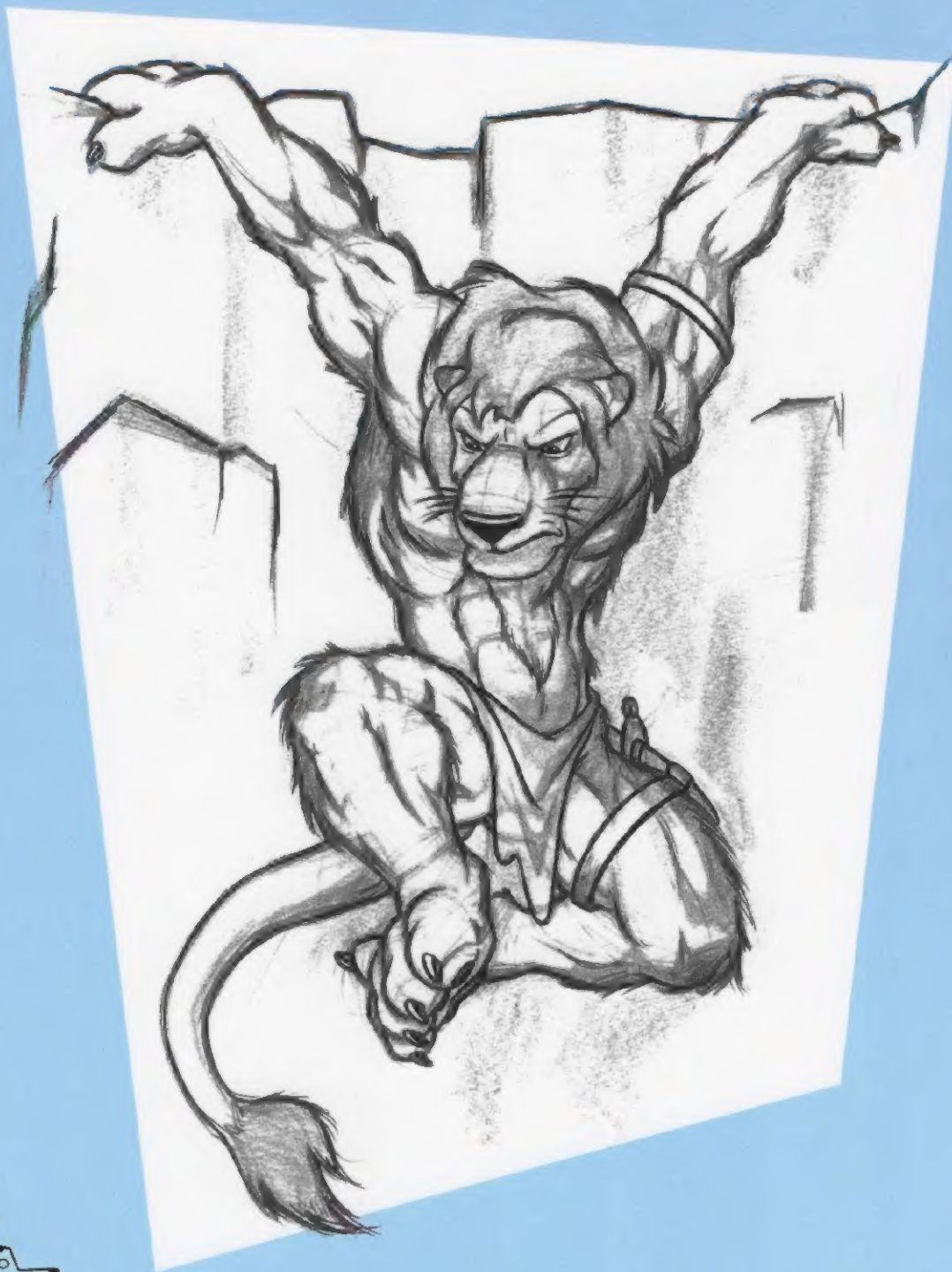
There was a pose in John Henry that I particularly liked. I tried to take it and capture it with an animal character. If you watch the animated short you'll find a very similar drawing in there.

I believe in guardian angels. I know a lot of people don't, but I do and that's my choice. I have a lot of nieces and nephews that were going to school at the time of the Columbine Shooting. This was something I did to inspire them and to let them know not to freak out—to help them calm down a bit. You may just have somebody watching over you. The reason I chose to draw the angel as a canine is that angels are loyal, so I choose a dog character to represent the angel and their loyalty to the ones they are watching over.





Sofawolf's Artistic Visions examines not just the artwork, but the process behind the art. Join us as we enter the world of Disney Animator "Herbie," and explore the creative process as he shares his wit, wisdom and talent.



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